

Fortunately, through community support and true dedication by the students, the cross display remained on the school's lawn for a full week as originally planned.

But we have to pause to ask would the display have been criticized at all if the crosses represented deaths from cancer or drunk driving accidents instead of abortion? I fear, especially as we near the National Day of Prayer, that this story is yet another example of the way in which freedom of religious expression is coming under attack in our Nation.

America was built upon Judeo-Christian values, but this very important element of our culture is now all too often not only ignored but also frowned upon. Children have been barred from bowing their heads in private prayer, from writing of their religious beliefs in school papers, and even from bringing the Bible to school.

I think it is a sad commentary on our Nation that we can have a serious debate on the House floor about using taxpayer dollars to buy hypodermic needles for drug addicts, and, yet, a child cannot read the Bible in his or her school library.

This is the very reason that the Religious Freedom Amendment, introduced by my good friend, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. ISTOOK), is so important to our Nation. The Religious Freedom Amendment protects the freedom of religion which we have enjoyed for so long under our Constitution, but which has been suppressed by recent court actions and trends.

It retains the First Amendment safeguard against official religion and keeps school prayer voluntary, but protects it just as other forms of free speech are protected.

In other words, the Religious Freedom Amendment protects religious expression like school prayer and the students' display at Lutheran High School in Westland, Michigan. It also, of course, retains the right of others to express their disapproval of any such display or to abstain from group prayer.

The key is everyone's rights are protected. Again, I repeat, the key is everyone's rights are protected. This was the case in Westland where, fortunately, the Religious Freedom Amendment was not necessary this year, as the students were not required to remove their display.

The school officials and students are quick to point out that the criticism of their cross display actually turned into a positive by generating publicly an overwhelmingly amount of support for their cause. But it is not always the case, as I indicated earlier. Other displays of religious expression, including private prayer, have been banned by law in locations nationwide.

In my opinion, and in the opinion of 75 percent of Americans polled, it is critical for Congress to pass legislation that ensures the religious liberties once again receive full protection in

America. I urge my colleagues to support the Religious Liberties Amendment that has been offered by the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. ISTOOK) and others on the House side.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PALLONE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

CINCO DE MAYO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, today is Cinco de Mayo, the 5th of May, which is celebrated throughout the Americas. It is a day of celebration for those who have their roots and heart in Mexico. It is a special day in history for Mexican and Mexican-Americans because, on the 5th of May in 1862, a very small, poorly armed band of Mexicans defeated, in an unbalanced contest, their colonial oppressors; as history records, too, that just several years after defeating their oppressors, that Mexican independence was lost and there was oppression in the country.

□ 1830

That is the day we celebrate today.

I come before the House tonight, and I have come many times to talk about the situation in our country relating to illegal narcotics. And I wish I could come here and celebrate the Cinco de Mayo with other Mexican Americans and supporters of Mexico but, in fact, I am not here to praise Mexico but to condemn Mexico on this occasion.

In fact, today, Mexico is a source of 50 percent of the hard narcotics entering the United States of America. Not only are these drugs entering the United States, but they are also corrupting the Mexico that these Mexican individuals fought on the 5th of May in 1862 to free their country and their people. Drugs are oppressing Mexico and they are destroying the United States of America.

We have tried to work with Mexico. I serve on the Committee on National Security of the Congress that deals with our national drug policy. We did not decertify Mexico last year or this year, and we should have. And I have sponsored resolutions and supported them in both instances, but they have not passed, for whatever reasons. But we should have decertified Mexico.

Mexico, to date, has not extradited one drug felon or one drug offender to the United States. And one reason they were not decertified was because we sought their cooperation in these areas such as extradition.

Mexico, to date, has, in fact, refused to allow our agents to arm themselves. Mexico, in fact, has not signed a mari-

time agreement. And the only other country is Haiti, and they have not done that because they have not organized their government. But Mexico is the only country I know of in the Western Hemisphere to not sign a maritime agreement. And the list goes on and on of failure to cooperate.

So we are not celebrating a happy Cinco de Mayo here in Congress. I am not. I am concerned that, again, that Mexicans who fought for freedom, for independence, for the right of the people to live in an open society and a free society are being oppressed because of drug trafficking within the country of Mexico and the drugs that have come into the United States.

If my colleagues do not think it is a problem, 50 percent of those hard drugs coming into the United States have put 2 million Americans behind bars. We have 20,000 deaths in the United States that are drug related. The cost to the American taxpayer is now \$16 billion. And we can lay at the doorstep of the Mexican Government the responsibility for so many of these illegal narcotics coming into the United States.

It is a sad commentary that our neighbors, in fact, are sending chemical weapons into the United States and chemical destruction, which is also destroying that country and its freedom that was fought for by these heroes on May 5th of 1862.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that I can come a year from now, on May 5th, 1999, and say that indeed the Mexicans have cooperated as neighbors, as friends in this hemisphere to gain their own people's freedom from the drug trafficking, from corruption and from the depression that it has brought to their society, and also free our country from the oppression, from the deaths that it has caused and from the drugs that are on our streets, in our schools, and in our communities.

FUNDING FOR THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, today I call on both the Democratic and Republican leaders of the House to pass the \$18 billion International Monetary Fund as soon as possible. It is urgent for Hawaii's citizens, workers, and the businesses that I represent.

In early winter 1997, economies in South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia collapsed. The effects on Hawaii have stifled recovery from the deepest recession the State has experienced in 50 years.

Problems began when the Japanese economy faltered in 1991. Tourism and direct foreign investment plunged. Devaluation of the yen and now other